

In the cold trees

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/44196040) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/44196040>.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter , Will Graham & Abigail Hobbs , Will Graham & Abigail Hobbs & Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham , Abigail Hobbs , Hannibal Lecter , Jack Crawford , Alana Bloom , Beverly Katz , Brian Zeller , Garrett Jacob Hobbs , Jimmy Price
Additional Tags:	Wendigo Will Graham , Wendigo Abigail Hobbs , Wendigo Hannibal Lecter , Wendigo family , Cannibalism , Murder , Adoption , will Graham is Abigail hobb's dad , Single Parent Will Graham , Hermit Will Graham , will raises abigail , Canonical Character Death , its just Hobbs tho , Adopted Abigail Hobbs , Abigail Hobbs is a Cannibal , Will Graham is a Cannibal , Will Graham is a Mess , Hannibal Lecter is a Cannibal , Autistic Will Graham , Dark Will Graham , Sassy Will Graham , Ravenstag , Episode Related , Episode: s01e01 , Apéritif , Digital Art
Language:	English
Collections:	Hannibal loves his Will
Stats:	Published: 2023-01-11 Updated: 2023-07-31 Words: 9,064 Chapters: 4/?

In the cold trees

by [SnufflesThePig](#)

Summary

Will finds a wendigo child in need of a wendigo dad, so when Jack asks for his help on a case seventeen years later, he has a daughter to think of. It changes less than you'd think.

Notes

Title is from Louise Erdrich's 'The Windigo'
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/louise-erdrich>

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Somewhere in Minnesota

He paused. That other wendigo scent- it was different tonight.

He'd been keeping his distance since the guy had been lathering the territorial scent on so thick he was liable to scare off anything worth eating. He didn't want anything to do with others anyway.

Something was off tonight though. The scent was weaker; for some reason, the other had abandoned his meticulous borders tonight. It made sense now that he could catch the other scent it must have been hiding.

There was a child.

There was no reason for him to stay. It made no difference that this wendigo's reasons for his paranoia were good ones. He shook his mane out to clear his mind of the scents and made to leave before he caught something that made him stop.

Fear.

There were few things that wendigos feared, even as children. There were fewer things still that incited enough fear in them to produce a scent. Why would the child wendigo be so afraid if it was with its father?

He lifted his head to taste the air again. There was no blood... what was the problem?

He hesitated for another moment. He did not want to cross the other wendigo's boundaries and inspire a confrontation. He disliked dealing with others at all. This was none of his business.

Ah, hell.

Careful of his antlers in the trees, he chased the scent of *wrong* through the forest, hooves crunching down through the hard, dry snow.

The scene he found was one that almost automatically had him shifting back to the Louisiana cop called to scenes of domestic violence and hostage negotiation. He'd certainly never encountered one like it in this form before.

"Da-ad?" the scared little girl before him stuttered breathily. She couldn't have been more than five, with long black hair and eyes blue enough to be apparent even in the dead of night. She looked like a little Snow White, even as she shook in her tiny yellow boots. She stared with those wide blue eyes as her father, a fully-grown wendigo with stick-like limbs and wolfish teeth, circled her like a shark.

The father was not here mentally, he could see it in the way he prowled like a true animal, spit dripping from his greedy maw. Despite their predilection for the hunt, wendigos had their ways of doing things, and this was not that. Caught somewhere between the violence of humanity and the

savagery of dogs, this wendigo was lost as a man and a beast. His daughter was about to pay the price.

He moved as the father pounced. The little girl screamed. Lost as he was, the beast never saw him coming. Two, four, six, nine antlers ripped through the father's body, and he thrashed. He would not die. He howled and snarled and slashed like a thing possessed, barely seeming to notice his wounds. His attacker kept his head down and waited for him to stop struggling.

It was slow. The girl didn't scream again, though he knew she was watching.

Eventually, the thrashing subsided to twitching, and he discarded the extra weight. He would have to move from this area now- hunters would find the body at some point. He hoped the stray mutt he had befriended here wouldn't be too sad to see him go. Perhaps he could take her.

He had another stray to deal with right now. He turned to check- the little girl was still there. She seemed stuck in place, big fat tears rolling down her face. She stared down a black feathered stag the size of a bus who had just killed her father, and her fear-scent lessened. Huh.

He considered her. What should he do? He couldn't drop her off anywhere, they'd feed her wrong. She wouldn't survive in human hands. Wendigo cubs were more vulnerable that way.

Well, they couldn't stay here. Those little boots of hers would be frozen through by now. He could figure it out once they were warmer. He'd just have to take her home with him for now.

She was surprisingly amenable to settling on his back. He supposed she knew she had nowhere else to go as well as he did. He's not sure if she looked back at the body of her father, but she didn't say anything as he carried her off through the woods, careful with his gait so as not to jostle her.

He set her down gently on the porch of the place he was renting for the night. Partway through the trip she'd fallen asleep, her tiny breaths barely ruffling his massive feathers. He had been a little worried she'd sink right into his mass and suffocate, but she was remarkably calm the whole time, and since she was blinking up at him now, she'd obviously made it well enough.

He felt uncomfortable with her watching owlishly as he shed his feathers, but he couldn't enter the house in this form. In a minute, he was as good as human again, smooth skin and curly hair. He rose in place and regarded her again through different eyes. She was still so small, she barely reached his calves. They eyed each other up, each one unsure what to make of the other.

Keeping half an eye on her, he pulled the flannel blanket from the porch rail and settled it around his shoulders. He kept his movements slow and obvious so she could see what he was doing. Her fear scent had all but faded now. Maybe she was too young to be afraid of strangers.

"That's a nice blanket. Is it warm?"

Her speech was stunted by the marks of development- rs that came out ws, pauses in odd places while she thought of the rest of the sentence. He amended his original hypothesis of five years old to four years old.

"We can... go inside," he offered, catching an odd pause in his own hoarse speech. He must not have spoken for a few days judging by the rasp of it. He hoped she wasn't a talker, or at least, that

she didn't expect him to be.

She didn't seem frightened by the proximity necessary for him to open the door for her. He supposed that would count as a win. He wasn't sure what was a good sign, with children. Trauma victims were a bit more familiar, but he'd never encountered one this young. A wendigo, no less. Perhaps there was a different procedure than for humans.

He finally got the latch to give and held the door open for her. Going through would mean putting her back to him, entering his territory, and if she was willing to do that he would at least be able to stow away that information. If she wasn't, he could stow that too.

Instead of heading inside, though, she paused and looked up at him. He tried to make himself meet her eyes. They were hard to avoid, as kids are.

"What's your name?"

A name. He had one, but not a lot of people had ever used it. His father never had. He'd checked the legal records after the old man had carked it to find it was nothing special. Still, it was supposed to be his.

"Will," he said. "Will Graham."

Elise

Chapter Summary

It was shaping up to be a good day until Jack Crawford walked into his classroom.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was shaping up to be a good day until Jack Crawford walked into his classroom.

The class tittered as they left, no doubt awestruck at the living FBI legend they were walking by. It was a little sad how easily impressed some of them were. Crawford had an impressive record, broad shoulders and a big booming voice, and that was all it took. Will, who'd met the man on one occasion, was not so taken with him. He shoved his glasses on his face, grateful he'd left them on the podium just for ambush situations such as these.

"Mr. Graham. Special Agent Jack Crawford. I head the Behavioral Science Unit."

"We've met," Will said shortly, granting Crawford a brief handshake.

"Yes. We had a disagreement when we opened up the museum."

A disagreement. That was a word for it.

"I disagreed with what you named it." Aside from literally labelling it a *museum* (and thus the inmates art)(one couldn't help but draw the zoo comparison), it both romanticized and trivialized the psychologies- and by extension, the people- within the institution walls. The labelling of the so-called 'criminally insane' was something society would never be able to perfect or even compromise on, but we could at least pretend to try.

"The, uh, Evil Minds Research Museum," Jack said with a straight face, somehow. Will finally finished packing up and it looked like he still wasn't going anywhere, so with a sigh, he set his briefcase back on its step.

They talked some more. Will shuffled in place, bucking like a bronco under the laser-hot attention he was being subjected to. He tried all the tricks, but obviously Jack was determined not to take a hint. He wasn't stupid, and he wasn't socially inept, so obviously the great agent Crawford intended to extend his (well-curated) understanding manner to Will in theory, but not in practice. There were people who believed that forcing eye contact was doing him a service of some kind. Charity. The softness of Jack's voice, like he was speaking to a spooked horse, didn't dissuade the notion. Nor did the way he kept returning to what made Will different in social scenarios. He even went right ahead and asked Will where he fell on the spectrum, *pushing Will's get-away-from-me glasses up his nose himself*, effectively trapping Will in a non-consensual pit of eye contact. It was horrible form. He could've had the decency to just look into Will's file for that information, but Jack

probably saw it the other way around. It made Will laugh a little thinking how the psychology department Jack was standing in the centre of would take his audacity. Alana Bloom would eat him alive.

“My horse is hitched to a post that is closer to Asperger’s and autistics than narcissists and sociopaths,” Will settled on.

“But you can empathize with narcissists and sociopaths.”

Not able to take it anymore, Will went back to fiddling with his briefcase. “I can empathize with anybody. It’s less to do with a personality disorder than an active imagination-“

Jack hummed over him. He had a nice voice, but it didn’t make up for him setting a large hand on Will’s briefcase and putting an end to his stimming. He probably took it as a sign Will wasn’t listening to him.

“Can I borrow your imagination?”

~o~

The case was fairly straightforward. Eight girls gone. Will answered Jack’s questions and explained his answers like a good boy, thinking he would be able to go home to Abigail and the dogs and finally relax if he could just get through this. The missing girls looked a bit like her, and suddenly he just wanted to be home with his daughter. Apparently, Jack had other plans.

“I want you to get closer to this.”

“No. You have Heimlich at Harvard and Bloom at Georgetown. They do the same thing I do.”

“That’s not exactly true, is it? You have a very specific way of thinking about things.”

Oh, yes, because obviously Jack cared to know all about that when he couldn’t even be bothered reading his file. No matter how smooth his voice, the only reason Jack cared was because it benefitted him.

“Has there been a lot of discussion about the, uh, specific way – I think?” Will asked dryly, going with the touchy neurodivergent routine.

“You make jumps you can’t explain, Will.”

“No, no. The *evidence* explains.”

“Then help me find some evidence.”

Will sighed. He had a good thing going on here. As a teacher, he could contribute to the field as an expert without interacting. Anyone who tested those boundaries didn’t have the authority to go through with surpassing them. His coworkers kept a respectful distance, and those that didn’t were self-aware and honestly decent enough to be good company when they inflicted such a thing upon him. His hours were preallotted- no surprises. No calls out to scenes in the middle of the night. No pushing. He was *comfortable* here.

“That may require me to be sociable,” Will said, despite the fact that Jack wouldn’t understand what that meant.

Three rings.

Click.

“Hey daddy!”

“Hey.” Will let a smile paint his face for a moment. They’d been hard to come by today. “How’d it go?”

“How’d what go?”

“The presentation, it was today, right?”

“Oh, the mock trial! Dad, I have so much to tell you. Seriously, it was crazy.”

“Crazy good?”

“CRAZY good! It was *insane!* I did so well, everyone was like, *woah.*”

Will had the fond words ‘we can have burgers tonight to celebrate’ halfway out when he remembered what he called for. He nearly marched right back into Jack’s office and said he wouldn’t do it after all. His eyes closed on a sigh and he pinched the bridge of his nose. Why was he agreeing to do this again?

Because the girls looked like Abigail.

“Dad? What’s wrong?”

“What- Ahh, nothing, sweetheart. I’m... I gotta- I’m gonna be home a little late tonight.”

“Late? What, why?”

Another sigh. “It’s, um. I’ve got a case.”

“Oh... I thought you didn’t do those anymore.”

“Yeah, me too. It shouldn’t take all night, I’ll text you— keep you updated, alright? Hopefully it’ll just be this one. There’s some meat in the fridge, middle shelf, and you can have the rest of that salad from last night.”

“Okay.”

“Is it? You promise?”

“I promise. But... maybe we can do burgers tomorrow night? Y’know, seeing as—“

Will laughed. His girl always knew how to negotiate. “Alright, yes, we can do burgers tomorrow night. With avocado.”

“Yesss!!”

“Alright, Abi, I gotta go. I’ll see you tonight.”

“Okay. I love you!”

“I love you too.”

Click.

Mr and Mrs Nichols were inconsolable. Will was glad he would never have to worry about his daughter ‘hopping on a train’, or even being attacked really. She was a full-grown wendigo now, and she could more than look after herself. Will didn’t have to worry about finding her in bed, cold to the touch, like they found Elise Nichols.

“Take your time,” Jack said soothingly. “When you’re ready to talk, you talk. If you don’t feel like it, you don’t talk. We’ll be downstairs. You let me know when you’re ready for us to come in.”

His footsteps faded down the hall, leaving Will and Elise alone. Will’s eyes slid over the cop cars outside- Mr. Nichols at the EMT panic pump, Mrs. Nichols with a hand on his back through the shock blanket- but he didn’t see them. His eyes were more drawn to the gentle breeze ruffling the silky white curtains that framed the window. They matched the moon.

He settled himself outside on the balcony. The killer would’ve come through there.

And he thought.

There you are, settled so neatly on the bed. Just like you’re sleeping. I want you to have as much peace as I can give you. I’m so sorry. Your nightgown is white, like your curtains. Like the moon. Purity. I hope you have enough to forgive me. To do what I did is without honour. All the others, I did right by them, but not you. I am so sorry for that.

Before I dishonoured you, you were sleeping right here. You shifted in your dreams. There was no need to wake you- I could keep it painless. I assured you it would all be given back to you- your life transformed into energy, into things I would cherish and use, into food that would sustain me. You would live on in this way. It is the nature of things- the food chain, the assimilation of one thing into another. None of you would go to waste, I promised.

I pinned you on the bed, grabbed your neck. My knee shouldered into your ribs, discouraging noise. I looked into your eyes. I needed you to understand what I was doing—

“You’re Will Graham!”

Will flinched and looked back down, but Elise was gone, gone, *gone*. His head swam with the incongruencies- the lights were on, the door was open, the breeze had stopped, and *this woman was here-*

“You’re not supposed to be here,” he protested, blinking against this sudden reality. It wasn’t right.

“You wrote the standard monograph on time of death by insect activity. I found antler velvet in two of the wounds. You, uh, not real FBI?”

Will didn’t have it in him to decipher her tone. She wasn’t supposed to be here.

“I’m a s-special investigator.” Get out.

“Never been an FBI agent?”

“Um strict – screening procedures.” *Why are you still here?*

“Detects instability... You unstable?”

Really. He was dealing with this now. This was why he didn’t do cases anymore. None of his students had ever asked him if he was unstable.

“Now, you know you’re not supposed to be in here.” Jack. Will was starting to appreciate that voice of his. Maybe Jack wasn’t so bad, and Will had just forgotten what bad really looked like in that blissful lull period he’d been teaching.

“I found antler velvet in two of the wounds, like she was gored. I was looking for velvet in the other wounds – but I was interrupted.” Oh, please.

Some new guy came in, then another, and suddenly there was a party in the damn room. You know, the one Will was supposed to be *completely undisturbed* in.

“Hold on, excuse me. Look, deer and elk pin their prey, OK? They put all their weight into their antlers, try and suffocate a victim. That’s how they would kill, like, a fox or a coyote.”

“All right, Elise Nichols was strangled, suffocated, her ribs are broken-“

“Antler velvet is rich in nutrients. It actually promotes healing,” Will interrupted. “He may have put it in there on purpose.”

“You think he was trying to *heal* her?” Jack asked, squinting across at him. Will didn’t bother trying to meet his eye this time.

“He wanted to undo as much as he could, given that he’d already killed her.”

“He put her back where he found her.”

“Whatever he did to the others, he couldn’t do it to her.”

“Is this his golden ticket?”

Will considered that, but this- he couldn’t put her down to that. This was a mistake. What happened to her shouldn’t have happened, and he mourned it.

“No. This is an apology.”

The room shuffled uncomfortably in the wake of that. Will didn’t care for it. They didn’t have to like the answers they asked for. He’d done his job.

“...Does anyone have any aspirin?”

~o~

Will found another stray on the way home. It had been a long day. Then a long case. Then a long plane ride. Then a long drive. It was well past dark, he hadn't eaten, and Will... Will was tired.

In perhaps the first stroke of luck today, Will remembered he had some jerky in the car for just such situations.

The dog was unsure of him, but not afraid. He recognized food when he smelled it, and that was what mattered. Will quickly established himself a friend.

Winston (it was Will's turn to name this one, so he called him Winston) was beautiful. A humble golden brown coat dappled with ash grey spots, a proud stance and a quiet majesty in the way he held his head. A dog after Will's own heart. The big fluffy tail didn't hurt, either.

They made it home by about ten thirty, and the door shuddered with the howls of Will's pack. Abigail was still up- the lights were on. She appeared in the window for a moment, green and black flannel jammies on. She waved. Will signalled to her that they had a new one, and while he didn't hear her squeal excitedly, he was sure she did. She disappeared to corral the pack so he could safely get Winston sorted before he met everyone.

It was good to be home.

Chapter End Notes

Jack: you don't have to do anything you're uncomfortable with.
Will, smelling an agenda: https://youtu.be/r3hTwsvJV_A

Jack: I want to treat you and your needs with the utmost respect.
Will: <https://youtu.be/b41oAgHJIro>

Will when Bev interrupts him: <https://youtu.be/3AoYWvXG9Hk>

Alana as soon as she finds out about all this mess: <https://youtu.be/Q06kOyqUoPQ>

Peace talks over protein scramble

Chapter Summary

How? How could Abigail's father have survived? Will had watched him die, he'd killed him! Had he jumped the gun? Wendigos were near impossible to kill for the average man, but Will was one himself, surely it had been enough?

It had not. Will was staring at the evidence now.

Chapter Notes

TW; graphic art. it's a realistic human heart, so if you're not cool w that... we'll first of all, why are you here?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The little girl's name was Abigail. She liked the dog. She was rather put out when Will said the dog didn't have a name. She said everything had a name. She looked into this one's eyes for a minute straight and then claimed her name to be Camel.

The girl, Abigail, was endlessly curious about everything. She wanted to know everything Will did and why, she wanted to know where he found Camel and why he didn't think to ask her name, why the sky was blue and why blood was red, and why some people tasted better than others. Those wide blue eyes took in everything like a sponge. She was very cognitively developed for her age as well. She wanted to contribute, but only when she felt like it. All the information she asked for didn't just disappear, it stayed up in that resilient little brain of hers for later use. She made associations, drew conclusions, albeit simple ones (she was only four). Her memory was sharp as a tack. She'd make a good hunter, if Will didn't eat her for annoying him first.

Abigail ate a lot. Wendigo cubs didn't have a handle on their hunger until they were older, so he actually had to take a break off of work just to keep her fed. It meant more moving around, so eventually he just left work altogether, started picking up jobs wherever he found himself.

He looked everywhere for a suitable guardian, but there weren't exactly adoption agencies for wendigos. He had no idea where to even start looking. Wendigos were solitary creatures, and very few and far between besides. If there was one in the state it would be surprising- and he looked in a lot of states. He was determined to get rid of her, though. He'd be a rubbish father, and he didn't want a kid.

One night about three months into this song and dance, there was a storm. Will could afford a decent place or an isolated place, not both, so the whole house shook with it. Not hard enough to worry him, but still. The place took rattling breaths with every gust of wind. There would be no hunting tonight, it'd be best to just pass out early.

Will was content with this until he heard a little whimper from the piano bench. They didn't have a piano, but they had a piano bench, and it seemed to be whimpering. Upon closer inspection, Will made out a tiny foot darting underneath it.

He approached slowly, unsure why he was doing it. It just seemed like the thing to do. Since he'd gotten that far, he didn't stop himself when he curled up as tight as he could and fit at least the top half of himself under the bench. It was very dark. His shoulders effectively blocked out everything beyond the borders of the bench, so it was just him and this little girl in a tiny shadowed nook. It quietened the storm from deafening to just loud. When he spoke, he just barely whispered, and that made it seem even quieter.

"What're you doing down here?"

The girl had her tiny hands over her tiny ears and her thick black mane besides, but somehow she heard him. It became apparent that the only reason any of him fit under here at all was that she'd made herself as small as she could. She was shivering. It wasn't cold.

"I'm scared," she cried just as softly back.

"Of what?" he replied. "We're safe here."

"You p-promise?" she hiccupped, looking up and into his eyes. Oddly enough, he didn't feel the immediate urge to look away, though he still did out of habit.

"Of course I do. But listen: the people who own this house that we're borrowing from them, they made it pretty poorly. They know they did. If it were to blow down, they'd be in big trouble. They don't want that. So they made sure even though it's not so great, it will stand in a storm."

Abigail blinked, eyes riveted to his. He convinced himself to meet her gaze this time. The more she focussed on him, the less she seemed to notice the thunder. Her hands had started to drop without her noticing. "That's w-why you're so calm," she whispered. "Bec-" she flinched as another jolt of thunder shook the house, and Will battled the confusing urge to pull her close. She wouldn't learn that way. "Because you... but what if they didn't make it strong enough??"

"Even if it didn't stand, and it all blew away at once, you would be okay. You are stronger than the human kids this house was made to shelter, even stronger than their daddies. And me, I'm even stronger than that. Let's say the windows break and the roof is blown off- I'd get really big and curl around you so none of it hurt you."

"But would it hurt you?"

"Maybe. But I'd be okay. I'm super strong, remember?"

"Yeah." She bobbed her head up and down fervently and hiccuped again. She stared at her toes as she considered this quite deeply. Then she looked up at him again. "So you're not scared of anything?"

"I'm scared of some things," he admitted.

"But if you're that strong you shouldn't be scared of anything."

"Being strong has nothing to do with it. There's lots of things for me to be afraid of. But there's not much for you to be afraid of."

"Because you'll protect me?"

Those wide blue eyes clamped on him like they knew exactly what the sentiment meant. Like she was testing him, analysing his reaction. Will's mouth opened, then closed, then opened again, and he found himself unable to let her down. He was under the piano bench, wasn't he? Maybe it was a foregone conclusion.

"...Yeah," he finally said, and it felt like a final thing. He had never lied to her before, and this didn't feel like a lie either. "Because I'll protect you."

He didn't even manage to regret it, not when he was busy handling an armful of four-year-old. Positions didn't get more awkward than a full grown man half-wedged under a piano bench trying to give a kid a hug.

Will stopped looking for guardians that week.

~o~

Will wasn't surprised when Jack cornered him in the bathroom, pacing like a caged animal. He was surprised by what Jack said, though.

"I want you to look at something for me."

Will frowned. That sounded ominous.

"Another girl?"

"No, it's..." Jack paused in his stride and looked right at Will. He didn't seem present enough to care that Will didn't look back. "It's a man. Thirty years old, single father. His daughter's one of the missing girls."

There was a father related? The killer loved the girl and... felt something worth killing over, for the father. Or maybe just the man?

"Let me see it."

Jack explained that this followed the vein of another case they were looking at, and now they thought the two might be connected. The men- always single fathers- had been found in much more ostentatious ways than the girls weren't. They'd never connected the two cases, since the M.O.s were totally different, but this couldn't be a coincidence.

No survivors meant no one Will had to talk to. He was shown to the crime scene and given free reign of the average suburban home.

Will had seen photos from the other scenes. This was much the same. A man- dark fluffy hair and a scruffy beard- impaled on multiple impressive sets of antlers, mounted on a wall to thrash and bleed and die slowly. Nine points.

And it smelled like the man Will had killed over a decade ago.

Will's breath stuttered. A single father. A man that looked like him, a single father to a girl that looked like Abigail. The antler arrangement even mirrored his own. And that *scent*- it was unmistakable.

How? *How* could Abigail's father have survived? Will had watched him die, he'd killed him! Had he jumped the gun? Wendigos were near impossible to kill for the average man, but Will was one himself, surely it had been enough?

It had not. Will was staring at the evidence now.

It made sense. The love with which he took to those girls, all of them a dead likeness to Abigail. The savagery Will could *taste* from the corpse of this man, like the killer had barely held himself back from gutting it with his teeth until it was beyond recognition. He wanted it in tatters, just mulch under his foot, he wanted it to sink into the floorboards in a smooth paste and never be more than that again. He *hated* this man.

He hated *Will* .

Will's mind spun as he retched. He couldn't tell Jack. He'd have to explain the similarities, why he recognized this tableau. And then Jack would want him and Abi under constant surveillance, a full security team- they couldn't operate like that, they needed to hunt.

Goddamnit.

Will fumbled with his phone, smashing the buttons down blindly, and praying to no one as it rang.

Ring.

Ring.

Ring.

Hurry up.

Ring.

Come on!

Ring-

Click.

“Dad?”

Will’s legs gave in just a little, and he slumped against the wall.

“Hey, hey, pumpkin...”

“Dad, what’s wrong? You don’t sound so hot. D’you need to come home?”

“Yeah. Yeah, I’m coming home. Abi, I don’t want to scare you, but I need you on high alert, understand? Don’t go out. Stay at school, I’ll come pick you up. No headphones, ears out. Got it?”

“Wh- yeah, of course. Dad, what’s going on?”

“I’ll tell you when I come and get you, okay? Just stay put, and don’t worry.”

“I’m worried.”

“Well don’t be. I’ve got you. You’re not in any danger at school...” Will closed his eyes. He didn’t want to hang up. “I shouldn’t have even called, got you worried, I just wanted to hear your voice. Had a bit of a moment... You know I love you, right?”

“I know. I love you too,” Abi huffed fondly, calmed by the familiar comfort in the exchange. She knew her dad was secretly a worry wart, and he could get jumpy when he had moments.

Will hesitated another moment before he had it in him to hang up. He took a few deep breaths and straightened, facing the corpse.

It looked like he was just going to have to kill the beast again.

Will did not stop for Jack on his way out. He walked and talked, and if Jack couldn’t keep up, the worse for him.

“You’re looking for a single man in his mid forties who had a daughter and lost her to foster care or adoption. He has some gripe with single fathers, because one took his daughter from him. He hates the father for that, he still loves his daughter. The men and the girls will bear a resemblance to the original pair. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have an adopted daughter that matches that description to pick up from high school.”

Jack must've heard him for once, because he didn't try to stop him leaving. Without further ado, Will got in the car and floored it.

Abigail promised not to come outside until she could see his car. Will got out and walked her over, all while she half-teased him just to pretend he wasn't making her nervous. He was a good father, so he pretended not to notice. He would soothe her as soon as he was sure she was safe.

"So, are you gonna tell me what this is about?" she demanded.

"When we get home," he promised. "But first, grocery store. You still want burgers, don't you?"

"With avocado!"

"Yes, with avocado," he chuckled. "Tell me about the mock trial."

And off she went, seeing the distraction for what it was and taking it anyway. Will was the only one who could get away with things like that when it came to Abi.

The remoteness of their home had never proven such a double-edged sword. Not a soul to find their bodies- the ones they killed or the ones they would die in. It had never been a problem before today.

When Abigail and he had put all the groceries away and greeted all the dogs, Will broached the subject.

"How much do you remember about your father?"

Abigail's lashes fluttered. It was her tell. That and the tiniest little intake of breath were the only ones she had.

"I seem to recall a birthday he forgot... yes, it's coming back to me... he never puts the toilet seat down..." They both shared a chuckle before she answered seriously. "I don't remember much. I remember he talked to me a lot. I remember snow and blood and being very scared. That's all."

Will nods. That's not so bad, all things considered.

"Today at work..." he began, unsure how the sentence ended.

"The case you're working."

"Yeah. It... the girls bear a striking resemblance to you. Which wouldn't normally be a problem, I know you can look after yourself. But, um. Today we found out the guy's been killing single fathers that bear a striking resemblance to me. With nine-pronged antlers. The same way I..."

"...Killed my dad," she finished in horror. Her wide eyes flicked up to him, and suddenly she looked just like she had that night in her little yellow boots. "Is it *him*?"

"I don't know. It... it has to be."

"But you killed him!"

“I thought so. But I smelled him, Abi. His scent. I guess- he must have survived. Or maybe he had a brother, someone to avenge him, I don’t know. I don’t know why he’d strike now, I don’t know how he could’ve even survived his wounds, I- I don’t know, Abigail. But until I do I want you with me or in a public setting, he wouldn’t strike at a crowd. Okay?”

Again, Abigail’s eyelashes fluttered, fighting off tears. Abruptly, she jolted into his arms, burying her face in his neck. He felt her tears against his skin. It broke his heart. He petted her hair and shushed her like he did when she was young.

“You’re gonna be fine, Abigail. I’ll kill him again if I have to.”

“I’m not just worried about me,” she hissed into his shoulder. He had nothing for her there, so he just nuzzled a little closer and closed his eyes.

~~~0~~~

Help the FBI with a psychological profile. It seemed Hannibal’s person suit had brought him full circle, right into the management of the zoo that so desired his captivity. He was curious to see where this would lead.

Jack wanted a psychological profile, but not of a killer. Who could pose such a dichotomous paradox as to give the FBI reason to trust his methods, but not his madness? Enough, even, to send dear Jack running to him? Hannibal would admit it- he was intrigued.

The second he stepped into the building, he smelled another wendigo. Dog hair, machine oil, gunpowder- cheap aftershave and death.

Suddenly this surpassed intrigue.

Will Graham was soft and solid, broad shoulders in a rumpled overshirt of a truly uninspiring shade and fluffy curls unbothered with where they fell. He was unapologetically out of place in Jack’s office of absolutes, and yet he made a more lovely centrepiece than Hannibal could’ve fabricated himself. There was an air about him like uncut stone, like a tree that would not bow. Perhaps, even, an uncharted cave that yawned too wide for comfort. No cheap pair of glasses could hide the natural fact of him. The undeniability of him was breathtaking.

He spoke that way too, and Hannibal was forced to conclude that he *was* that way right down to the core. In fairness, there was probably no other way to be what Will was, and that was the value of it. He countered each of Hannibal’s queries with a dry triviality, like the answers sloughed off of his tongue in slices rather than him building them by hand. He was funny. He no doubt made people terribly uncomfortable. He made Hannibal positively glow.

He caught Jack staring at Will with raised eyebrows during one of their exchanges. He knew Will was a known recluse, not much of a talker- obviously his readiness to play ball with Hannibal was a surprise to the man who introduced them. The thought delighted him.

*I can work with this,* Hannibal thought, but he was enjoying their conversation too much to pursue the question of *how*.

--0--

A new girl was found to match the rest. She was different in many ways, not the least because she was not found alone.

Cassie Boyle was naked, perched upon a stag's head, nine piercings from the antlers. She was splayed open to the heavens like a discarded rag on a clothesline, random in its elegance. The man was another story entirely. The only part of him present was his heart, set delicately against Cassie's chest in a nest of black feathers and white flowers. Lilies. For purity. It had been thoughtfully covered with a clear dome case stitched into Cassie's flesh for convenience. She was nothing but furniture, and he, the glorious centrepiece.



The half-crazed wolf of a wendigo Will found drooling and snapping at his daughter seventeen years ago did not do this. This was an answer, but not from an admirer- from someone with an agenda.

--0--

Will dropped Abigail off at a busy coffee shop in the centre of town early in the morning. It seemed even on the run from a homicidal man-eater, school caught up to her- she was to attend her classes online. Will didn't ask for details, they would surely go over his head. It left him one less thing to worry about, since he couldn't exactly take her along to crime scenes.

He came back to one Hannibal Lecter with a hand poised to knock on his motel door, tupperware in hand.

"Will," he called jovially. "Good morning."

Will looked around. He eyed the tupperware suspiciously. Human meat. He could smell it. And... eggs?

"Where's Crawford?"

"Deposed in court. The adventure will be yours and mine today."

Will stayed where he was. This next part was important; Wendigo relations were not to be taken lightly. There were greatly variable, solitary creatures. They did things very differently than one another, and territorial battles were things of legends. If Hannibal crossed a line Will couldn't abide by, or if Will had some value Hannibal couldn't stomach, one of them would die.

Will jutted his chin at the tupperware container and spoke quietly.

"Who's that?"

Lecter did not do him the disrespect of checking that they were alone. He merely smiled- a thing too genuine to quite fit on his genteel face. It made him look less like a marble statue. Will thought the marble might return to him when the smile faded, but it didn't. Will had done something to melt the facade and make him earnestly warm.

"The mother of a patient of mine. She enjoyed doing unspeakable things to her daughter, right up until she didn't," he raised the tupperware pointedly.

Will nodded. Psychiatry would be a good position for a wendigo with those standards to hunt in. You follow the suffering to the source, cut out the root problem. It's not far from Will's own M.O. That was why he joined the force, after all.

Lecter showing up at Will's place, even if it was a temporary one, was also a show of good faith. They were on Will's home turf. Lecter was as good as showing Will his hands and turning around slowly, given that he was in Baltimore first.

In light of that, Will decided to respond with his own show of good faith. He strode forth and opened the door without holding it for Lecter, effectively turning his back on the man. Reciprocity.

Lecter said nothing about Will not turning on the lights. Neither of them really needed light to see, anyway, and Will preferred the dark. They settled by the window, and Will properly considered the man across from him. He'd never really sat and spoken with another like him before.

Lecter's hands were large and corded with veins and muscle that no doubt continued up under that tailored suit of his. Hands with power. He spoke with a mellifluous cadence that recalled something

rich and sweet with the consistency of molasses. His accent rose and fell like the tide, little waves that lapped at Will's ankles. Will was not stupid enough to think he was wading through water, though.

"A little protein scramble to start the day," Hannibal said with a tiny wave he couldn't quite tamp down on. Will gathered he was a man who was all about presentation- he had likely employed all the restraint he possessed to bring Will something as simple as 'protein scramble' and introduce it as such. His tone was far too deliberate in its casualness. Will appreciated the thought, so once again, he was gracious in turn.

"You made sausage yourself just for protein scramble?" he grunted, acknowledging the effort. Lecter subtly lit up at the observation. It made him warmer again.

"One thing you must know about me, Will: I do nothing by halves."

Great, now that that was out of the way-

"Do you know the wendigo they're calling the Shrike?"

Lecter blinked, regarding Will over his paper cup like one might a curiously beautiful broken window.

"Why do you assume I should know him?"

Will quite nearly rolled his eyes. He made it clear in his tone he didn't appreciate the assumption that he was stupid.

"Because there have been killings in your territory. You know. Who is he? Where does he live?"

Lecter rather sheepishly backtracked, asking forgiveness with his eyes.

"A man by the name of Garrett Jacob Hobbs. He does not currently have a permanent residence, although he is fond of a hunting cabin in Minnesota that he legally owns."

Garrett Jacob Hobbs. Will breathed out the fear of the last week. He snorted out air- a tell reminiscent of his other form. Sometimes the lines between his forms... blurred. Today, he was a father, and today, he would keep his daughter safe.

"We can go as soon as we finish breakfast if you'd like," Lecter said. Will started, having almost forgotten he was there. He did not do that often. Lecter's presence was less bothersome than most.

"We?" he asked delicately, running the pads of his fingers over his bottom lip. He looked at Hannibal directly. He found himself wanting to see every twitch the good doctor made.

"Excuse my presumptuousness. If this is a matter of revenge, of course you are entitled to it, but I did not take you for a man to put such a thing above the safety of his daughter."

He didn't. Lecter was just assuming he was not being considered a threat in this scenario. But Will had to admit that there didn't seem much point in leading him on if Lecter wanted him gone.

"So, you don't mind? That we're, um. We'll be seeing a lot of each other, if Jack has anything to say about it."

“Most assuredly not. I was not exaggerating in the slightest when I said it was a pleasure to meet you.”

Wait... Will's eyebrows rose of their own accord. Was he actually serious about his offer?

“Enough to *hunt* with me?”

“I could get rid of him for you, if you would prefer. But eventually, yes, Will, if you would have me.”

Will blinked and snorted again, head reeling back ever so slightly as he parsed this. Hunting humans was one thing- to offer to fight a wendigo Hannibal himself had no quarrel with for Will was tantamount to pledging fealty. He could *die*. And what, so Will could kick his feet up and get some shuteye? And hunting together- wendigos rarely did that outside of mated pairs. They were solitary creatures.

“You’ve been that lonely?” burst out of Will’s mouth before he could wrangle it back down his throat where it belonged. Shit, *shit*, **shit**.

Hannibal, however, merely smiled in that rare, sincere way of his that made the sun feel warmer.

“No, Will. I find you that interesting.”

## Chapter End Notes

'she wanted to contribute, but only when she felt like it' -my report card comments

Love that when they first meet Hannibal is judging will's outfit and spouting mental poetry about will's rugged handsomeness and will's just like 'he's got nice hands, does he want to eat me?'

Hannibal: \*desperately trying to flirt with will\*

Will: hammds,, 🤔🤔👁️👄👁️s.... strong gg .....,,

Will slipping between mentally calling Hannibal by his first and last name 🤔😞

Will: \*doesn't find him that interesting\*

Hannibal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ds6UITMb9g>

# Hunting

## Chapter Summary

Will stopped fighting the urge to look over at the doctor. There was no difference in him at all save from the darkening of the shine in his eye and the swift end put to his tapping on the steering wheel.

They didn't speak for the rest of the drive.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*Abigail taught Will many things. She taught him that things had names. She taught him how to sing to put her to sleep. She taught him just how different wendigo and human children were. And most recently, she taught him how to braid her hair. In return, he taught her how to hunt and speak french, how to make sure a piece of meat was safe, what she could trust and what she couldn't.*

*They taught each other how to be a family.*

*As they grew, Abi taught Will about things he'd never have even considered, like how to hide scars with foundation. She taught him how to play the guitar because she refused to learn alone. She taught him how to look after himself as best she could, mostly through a judicious blend of bribery, ultimatums, and hostage negotiation (her being the hostage). She taught him to value consciousness. She taught him to value sleep.*

*Will had never wanted a child. He was, in all likelihood, a rubbish father. But god, Abigail had to be the best daughter in the world.*

~~0~~

The drive was quiet, and it had Will thinking up all sorts of things. Hannibal could be leading him to his death, having made a deal with Hobbs to lure him there. But then, he had no more reason to suffer Hobbs than he did Will. Will was confident in his ability to read people- it was what he did, after all. He was confident that Lecter wouldn't waste time with something he didn't see potential in. And between himself and Hobbs, Will was confident that he had more.

But then, what if he was working with Hobbs to get rid of Will with the intention of dealing with Hobbs afterward?

...No. Will couldn't explain it, but that wasn't it. He just knew Hannibal hadn't lied to him yet. It was so clear in how off-balance Will made him, how tiny the fissures in his person suit were and how they glinted only in certain lights. Something about Will had him stumped in a way he'd never been stumped before, and if that wasn't potential, Will wasn't sure what was.

He wondered where unconventional ended and unheard of began when it came to their kind. He didn't know much about them, but he knew he'd never come across any evidence of a pair of wendigos being *friends*.

"Thank you," Will blurted before he realised they were halfway through an interminable drive and now it was gonna be weird. Maybe he could make it better? "I know we don't usually... get along."

"We do sometimes, or the species would die out."

"I meant outside of mated pairs."

"How do you think they become mated pairs?"

Will shrugged.

"Never really thought about it."

"Truly?" There was a pause that spoke for itself. "Your mother or father never explained these things?"

"My father was more interested in booze than explaining the finer points of wendigo relations to me," Will grunted matter-of-factly. "We stayed away from others."

"Forgive me for my forwardness, but how did you come to have a daughter?"

Will wasn't surprised Hannibal knew. If he hadn't guessed from the crime scenes, he would've smelled Abi in the motel room.

"Twelve odd years ago I found the man we're tracking about to eat his daughter. I killed him— or, I thought I did."

Will watched the gears turn in Hannibal's head through the side mirror.

"You impaled him on your antlers, just as his victims were found impaled."

"Single fathers and wind-chafed daughters. They look like her."

"And you." Will didn't reply. "Then there is no need for thanks. I will enjoy the end of this man."

Will stopped fighting the urge to look over at the doctor. There was no difference in him at all save from the darkening of the shine in his eye and the swift end put to his tapping on the steering wheel.

They didn't speak for the rest of the drive.

Hannibal stopped the car three miles from the cabin, downwind. Will could smell his prey. It wasn't as strong as it had been on the bodies, but Hobbs had marked them to high heaven. This scent was overlapped- old under more recent, under more recent than that.

"It will be easier to walk in our other forms," Hannibal stated pointlessly. Will knew that. He didn't want to call himself nervous, but he was unused to changing in the day, and very unused to changing in front of others. But there was no use delaying it. They turned from each other to disrobe, Hannibal folding his three-piece suit (it took him a significantly longer time than Will) neatly and returning it to his car.

With no further talk, Will sloughed off the confines of his skin for a mantle of feathers and fur. He felt inexplicably steadier on his hooves than his feet, but then, he did have four of them, and each of them was much more solid than a human foot. If he put much thought behind it, one of his stomps could shake the ground. And with twelve hundred pounds of muscle to hold up, it was little wonder.

Will breathed in and out deeply with a characteristic snort. He had an agenda tonight, but it was still good to get out like this. His bones fit. He was physically capable of what he should be capable of. The smells flooded through his muzzle, and the breeze whispered softly through his feathers in recognition. The familiar weight of his antlers calmed him. He was whole again.

Beside him, something shifted, and Will turned his attention to his company.

Black as night, Hannibal rose, unfolding like a flower. His graceful, sloping antlers looked crafted personally by the hand of God, making him seem much taller than the seven-foot-something he was. Though his shoulders were as broad as they were in his other form, his skin was impossibly tighter. Those impressive muscles were carved differently into him, running up and down his form like a deadly current rather than pooled over it like a calm lake. He was string and sinew, but so angular, sharp as knives. He was little more than a skeletal frame of indescribable proportions, undeniable muscle stretched to accommodate, and the thinnest black membrane holding it all together. His features were almost elvish in their lithe elegance, stretched out like taffy. His hands were like plate-sized spiders.

His head was very close to a human skull, although not quite enough to pass. Will saw the doctor in the cheekbones, the cut of the pantomime jaw. His snow-bright eyes were sunken into cavities the size of a human fist, milky-white. He didn't quite have lips, but his mouth pursed over his large square teeth all the same. That was familiar, too.

More characteristic than any of this, though, was his posture. With his slender features and high centre of mass, he was almost concave with it, straight-backed and proper. Too human.



His shift had wiped away all the extra things humanity insisted upon, things of ultimate unimportance, and left him this most natural thing. This core truth. This spectre of death. Will wondered if this was why wendigos didn't meet, why his father had kept him from others and never spoken of his mother, why Garret Jacob Hobbs had been out of his mind with adoring reverence for something he saw in his daughter, something he had to possess so wholly the only answer was consumption. Looking at Hannibal Lecter, Will was witness to a potential so deep and damning that he momentarily became it.

Keeping his hooves firmly on the precipice, Will mentally rooted himself back into objectivity. This gave him a little more insight into Hannibal. From what Will understood, he himself was a feathered stag because his diet at the peak of his early developmental stage was mainly bird and deer meat. There was no mistaking Hannibal's structure for anything but human.

Will snorted and shook out his mane to temper his daze. He was not here for Hannibal, although how the doctor navigated this situation with him would be notable information. It was time to focus on the task at hand.

Hannibal took point, as he knew the way. He set a steady pace, not rushing nor tarrying. His footfalls were near silent. He painted a stark picture against the snow, looking like a winter-dead tree that had learned to walk. He moved just like his human form, with a cat-like grace that Will found near hypnotic to the point where his own body echoed the rhythm, his hooves landing in the indents Hannibal left in his wake. It was so quiet.

Hannibal didn't really need to lead once they had the scent, so perhaps it was another gesture of goodwill. Will was suspicious about how much effort was being put into lowering Will's guard, and then reflected that that probably said more about him than it did Hannibal. Maybe sometimes a duck was just a duck, and Will was a paranoid bastard.

Through the trees, the shape of a canon began to emerge. Pelts were hung up outside, the fur ruffling lightly in the breeze. Traces of blood streaked the snow in places. The tracks around were wild, erratic, with no clear trails followed or even gait apparent. This was the home of a wild animal far more capable than it should be.

And Will could smell him inside.

## Chapter End Notes

It's the first murder date 🥰🥰🥰

Will: Ye dw I've just got slight beef with a guy I'll handle it—

Hannibal: name.

Will: what?

Hannibal: name.

Will: no, don't worry, I just.

Hannibal: give. Me. A. Name.

Hannibal treating his wendigo change like it's a fucking drag show:

<https://youtu.be/oxVx4r2Ocf0>

Will just tryna get where he needs to go: <https://youtu.be/VVeL-Gp5FMk>

## End Notes

Will and Abigail: <https://youtu.be/nPI8U1jKn-0>

Will raising Abigail: <https://youtu.be/4StsJxplSjM>

Will and Abigail having silent conversations: <https://youtu.be/IAuDHr3UEeg>

They would absolutely be the coolest duo

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!